

C. Hanlon September 16, 2001

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September 16, 2001

Ms Carol Hanlon, S&ER Products Manager
US Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
PO Box 30307 M/S 025
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0707
(Fax 1-800-967-0739)

Dear Ms Hanlon:

I am writing to in response to the request by the Secretary of Energy for public comments to inform his upcoming decision regarding the suitability of Yucca Mountain as a site for a high-level nuclear waste repository.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has sponsored incredibly thorough and broad characterization, analysis, and modeling of Yucca Mountain to assess its suitability for the nation's high-level nuclear waste repository. Our knowledge of Yucca Mountain's geology, hydrology, and history is extraordinarily detailed. Moreover, the projections of likely and unlikely normal and disruptive future trends and events are credible and close to exhaustive. The resulting documents provide an adequate basis for finding that **Yucca Mountain is suitable for development as a repository**. I am impressed by the extensive review by individual experts and by expert bodies, such as the National Research Council and the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, that DOE has called upon to ensure the validity and adequacy of its studies.

It is timely for the Secretary to proceed to **recommend the Yucca Mountain site to the President** at this time, as the scientific analysis is convincing that a repository there would meet the radiation protection standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Furthermore, I am not aware of any reasons that should prevent the President from concluding that the **Yucca Mountain site is qualified for the preparation and submission of a construction license application to the NRC**.

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I offer two other comments that are relevant to the consideration of a possible recommendation by the Secretary. (1) I am concerned that further delay in licensing and constructing a repository for high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel is not in the national interest. Currently these materials are stored in numerous locations around the country, and some sites are running out of storage capacity. (2) We treat or recycle all other waste streams to minimize the pollution and environmental and health impacts associated with their disposal. In parallel with proceeding to license and construct a repository at Yucca Mountain, I urge the Secretary to support research, development, and policies that would lead to acceptable methods for recycling and/or treating the nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel. Methods for treatment and recycling would ensure that the materials that are disposed in Yucca Mountain truly have no further use, are minimized in quantity, are as environmentally benign as possible, and have the shortest possible period of toxicity.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my comments.

Sincerely,



Beverly K. Hartline, Ph.D.
Geophysics